History of the Archer House and Sherman Hotel in Fairbury, Illinois

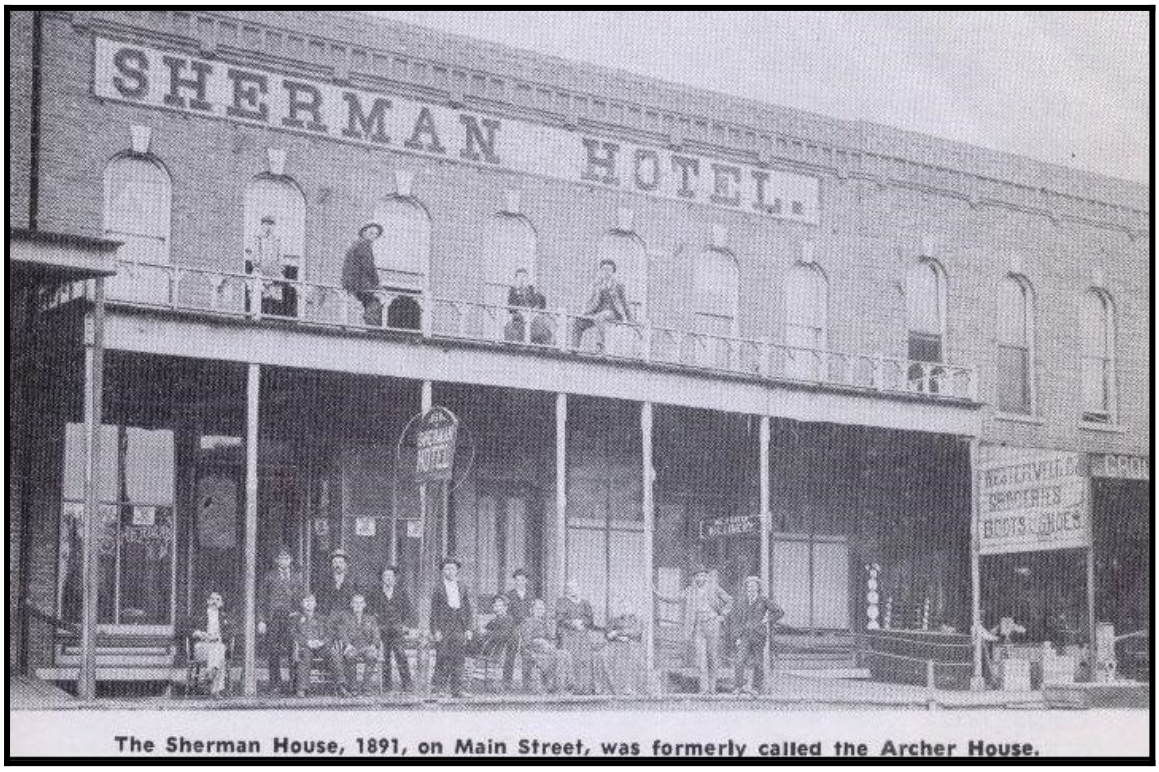
Background

The building that was called the Archer House and later the Sherman Hotel is still standing in Fairbury, Illinois. The building signs for these two hotel names is badly faded. The second word, "House" is visible to the naked eye. The first word is not readily visible.

The Fairbury Improvement Group, has initiated the repainting of three building advertising signs in Fairbury. The Occident Flour sign and the Swing & Steidinger signs have already been re-painted. This group plans to re-paint the building advertising sign for the Archer House/Sherman Hotel in May of 2018.

Photographs of the Two Hotels

There are no known photographs of the Archer House. There is only one known photograph of Sherman Hotel:

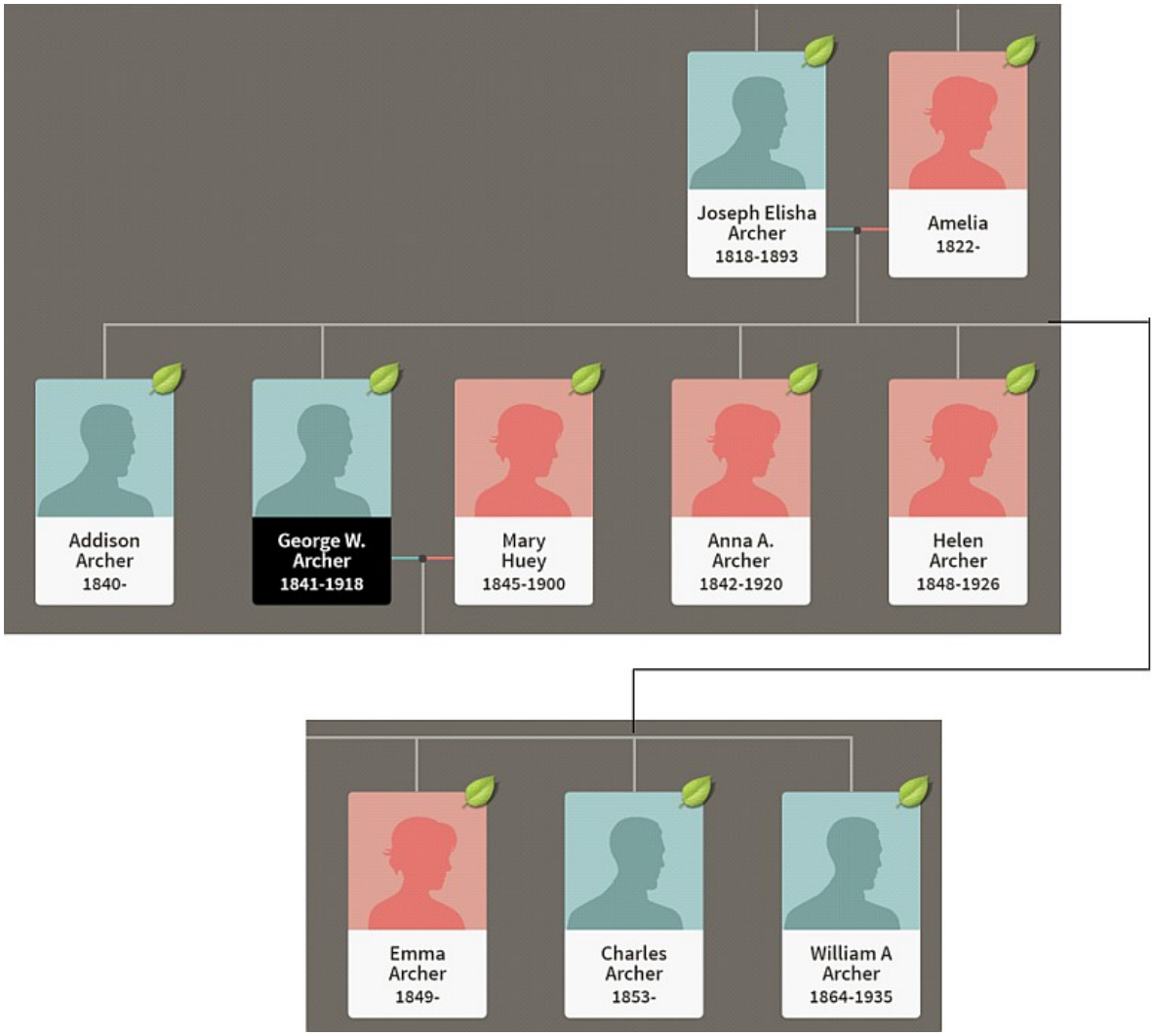


The Sherman House, 1891, on Main Street, was formerly called the Archer House.

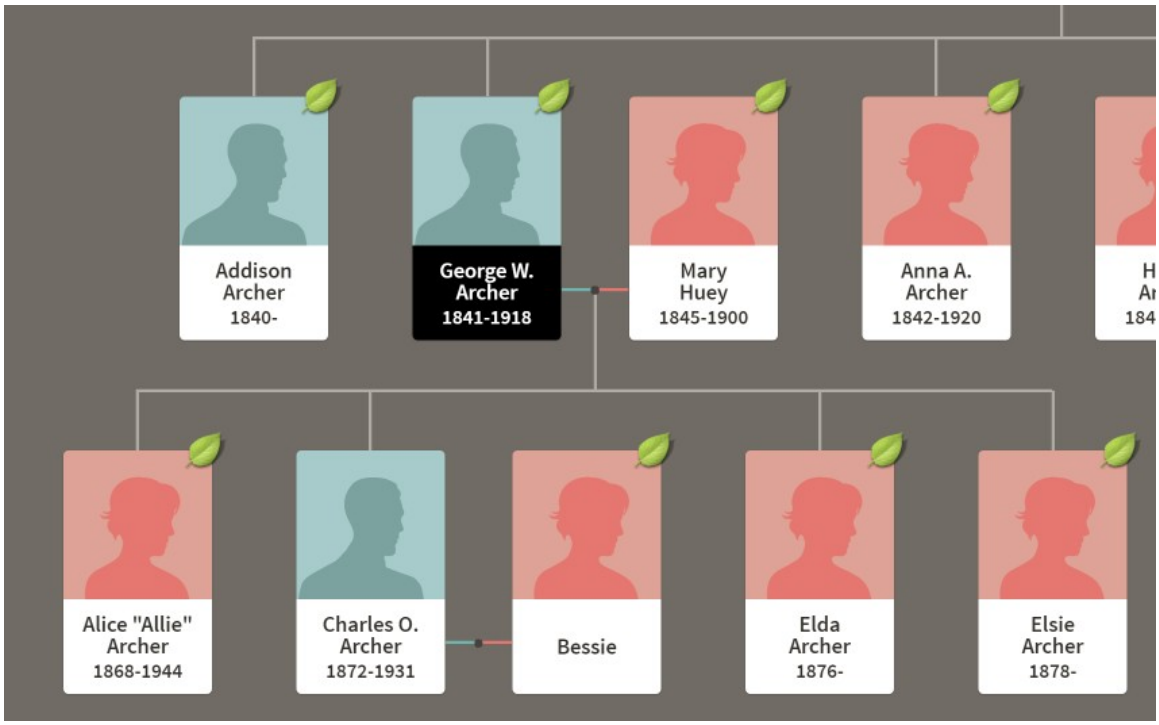
Archer Family

Several historical resources were used to construct the genealogy of the Archer family. These resources included the directory of graves in the Fairbury Graceland cemetery available from the Dominy Memorial Library web site. Another resource was Ancestry.com. The online digitized Fairbury Blade newspaper was accessed from the Dominy Memorial Library web site. Google Internet searches were also performed.

The genealogy of the Fairbury Archer family is shown below:

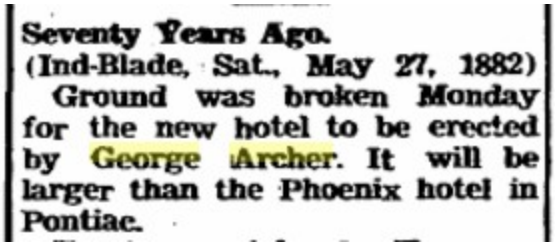


George W. Archer was born in 1841 in Plymouth, Vermont. He was the owner of the Archer Hotel in Fairbury. His family is shown below:



Historical Information
The following historical information was found concerning these two hotel names. The data is in chronological order, with the oldest information first.

May 27, 1882


Seventy Years Ago.
(Ind-Blade, Sat., May 27, 1882)
Ground was broken Monday for the new hotel to be erected by George Archer. It will be larger than the Phoenix hotel in Pontiac.

This Independent Blade article documents that it was George Archer who build the archer hotel in 1882. It is likely the Archer Hotel building advertising sign was painted when the hotel was completed in 1882.

March 8, 1885

The Decatur newspaper had the following article:

Mrs. J. Sayre Son have disposed of the Archer House at Fairbury, which they have successfully conducted for several years past, and expect to remove to this city in a few days.

April 2, 1885

The Decatur newspaper had this article:

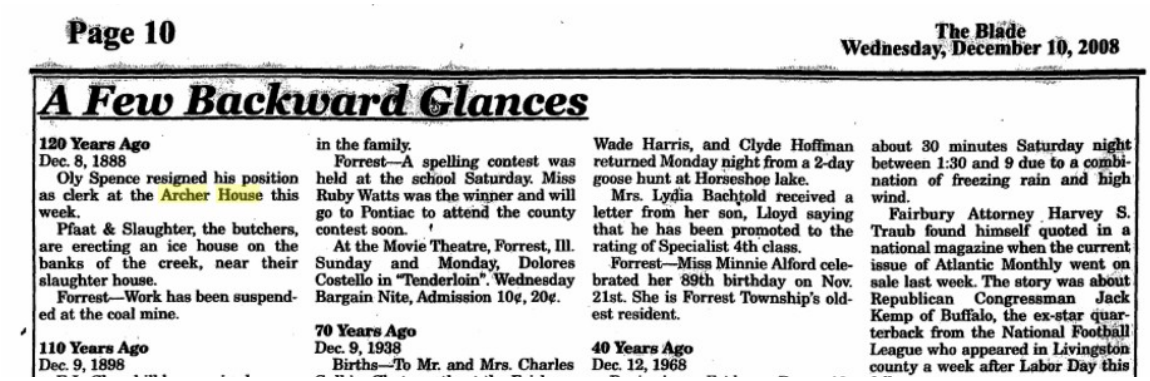
Mrs. M. Savre, formerly of the Archer House, Fairbury, 111:, has leased and taken possession of the capacious building, No. 307 North Franklin strait, and will open it as a boarding house on Saturday next--the 4th mat. Mrs. b. has had considerable experience in the hotel line, and enjoys an enviable reputation both as a caterer and in the general conduct of the business. In her new location she has fine rooms, newly furnished and in the best style.

Oct 14, 1885

The Champaign County Herald had this article:

Homer
- Sigle Summers left for Fairbury, IL where he has a position as clerk at the Archer House.

December 8, 1888



Page 10 The Blade Wednesday, December 10, 2008

A Few Backward Glances

120 Years Ago
Dec. 8, 1888

Oly Spence resigned his position as clerk at the Archer House this week.

Pfaat & Slaughter, the butchers, are erecting an ice house on the banks of the creek, near their slaughter house.

Forrest—Work has been suspended at the coal mine.

110 Years Ago
Dec. 9, 1898

in the family.

Forrest—A spelling contest was held at the school Saturday. Miss Ruby Watts was the winner and will go to Pontiac to attend the county contest soon.

At the Movie Theatre, Forrest, Ill. Sunday and Monday, Dolores Costello in "Tenderloin". Wednesday Bargain Nite, Admission 10¢, 20¢.

70 Years Ago
Dec. 9, 1938

Births—To Mr. and Mrs. Charles

Wade Harris, and Clyde Hoffman returned Monday night from a 2-day goose hunt at Horseshoe lake.

Mrs. Lydia Bachtold received a letter from her son, Lloyd saying that he has been promoted to the rating of Specialist 4th class.

Forrest—Miss Minnie Alford celebrated her 89th birthday on Nov. 21st. She is Forrest Township's oldest resident.

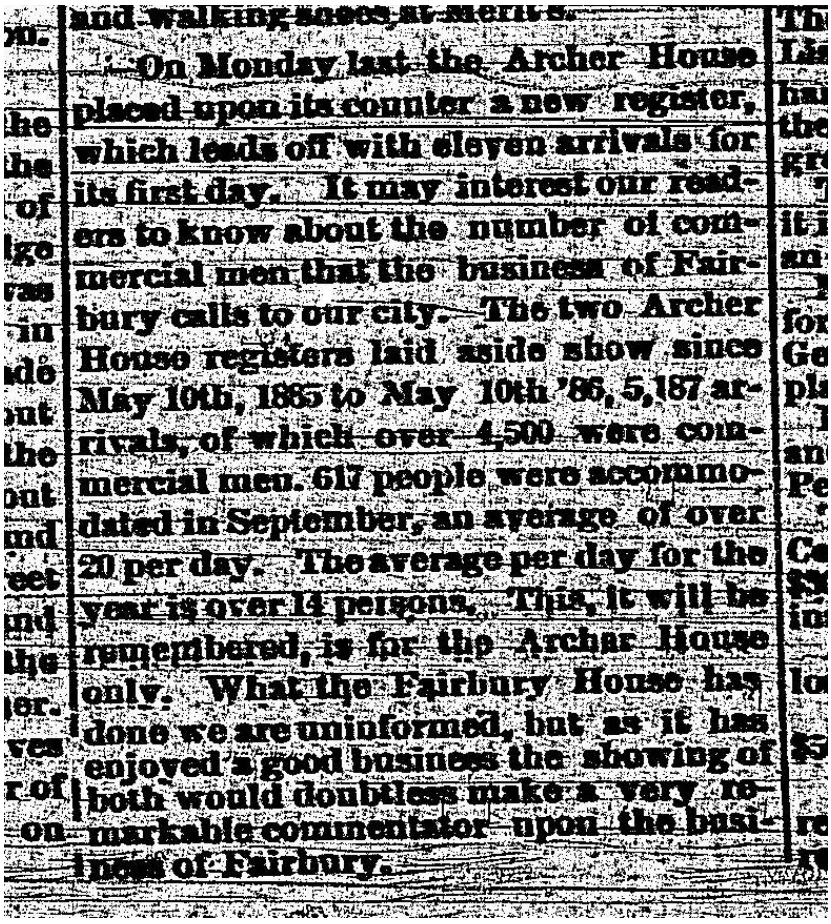
40 Years Ago
Dec. 12, 1968

about 30 minutes Saturday night between 1:30 and 9 due to a combination of freezing rain and high wind.

Fairbury Attorney Harvey S. Traub found himself quoted in a national magazine when the current issue of Atlantic Monthly went on sale last week. The story was about Republican Congressman Jack Kemp of Buffalo, the ex-star quarterback from the National Football League who appeared in Livingston county a week after Labor Day this

May 14, 1886

The Blade article on number of patrons at Archer House is shown below. It is retyped for clarity after the image of the article.

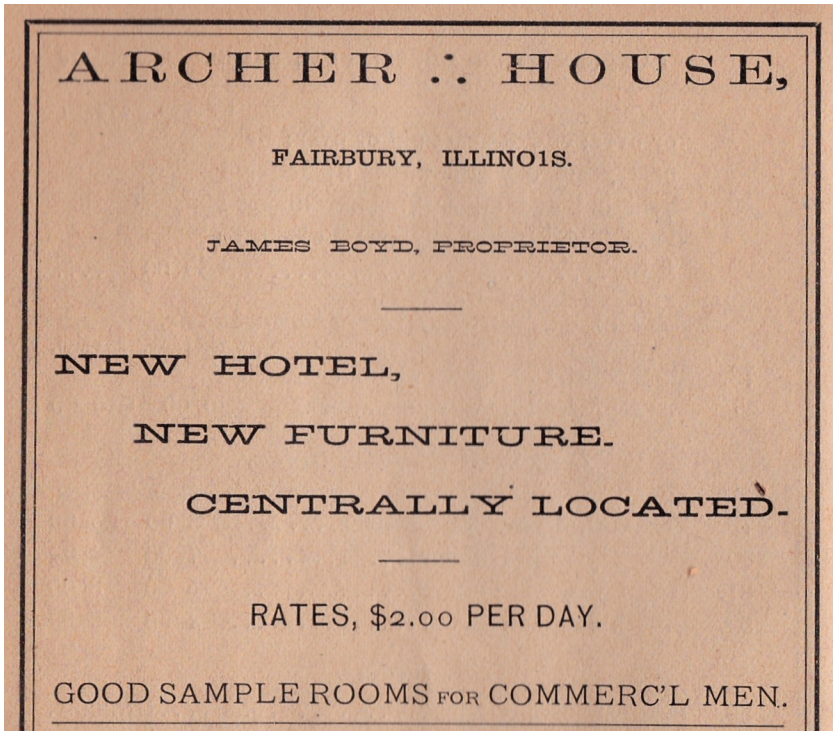


and walking sticks at Merit's.

On Monday last the Archer House placed upon its counter a new register, which leads off with eleven arrivals for its first day. It may interest our readers to know about the number of commercial men that the business of Fairbury calls to our city. The two Archer House registers laid aside show since May 10th, 1885 to May 10th '86, 5,187 arrivals, of which over 4,500 were commercial men. 617 people were accommodated in September, an average of over 20 per day. The average per day for the year is over 14 persons. This, it will be remembered, is for the Archer House only. What the Fairbury House has done we are uninformed, but as it has enjoyed a good business the showing of both would doubtless make a very remarkable commentator upon the business of Fairbury.

On Monday last the Archer House placed upon its counter a new register, which leads off with eleven arrivals for its first day. It may interest our readers to know about the number of commercial men that the business of Fairbury calls to our city. The two Archer House registers laid aside show since May 10th, 1885 to May 10th '86, 5,187 arrivals, of which over 4,500 were commercial men. 617 people were accommodated in September, an average of over 20 per day. The average per day for the year is over 14 persons. This, it will be remembered, is for the Archer House only. What the Fairbury House has done we are uninformed, but as it has enjoyed a good business the showing of both would doubtless make a very remarkable commentator upon the business of Fairbury.

1886 Fairbury Fair Program



1887-1888

This old book on the 1887-88 season has a listing for the Archer House in Fairbury. The book title is Henry C. Miner's American Dramatic Directory for the Season of 1887-1888.

ber of sheets can accommodate, 30 3-sheet bill boards, 2 stands 11x25 and 11x34. Newspapers: daily, Sun; weekly, Eye, (Sat.); advertising rates 5c. per line.. ...Hotels: Washburn, special rates.

EUREKA, 2,000. R. R., Chic., St. Louis & Western; Wabash. Darst's Hall, Arthur Elkin, manager; seating capacity, 500; rental, one night $6, three $15; license, $3. Size of stage, 12x40; number sets scenery, 3. Newspapers: Journal (Th.) ... Hotels: Francks, regular rates, $2 (special also); Little.

EVANSTON, 5,000. R. R., Chicago & N. Western Union Hall; seating capacity 400. Newspapers: Index (Sat.), semi weekly, North Western.....Hotels: Avenue, regular rates, $2 (special also); French, Lakeside.

FAIRBURY, 2,500. R. R., T. P. & W.; Wabash. Du Bois Opera House, T. A. Du Bois, manager; seating capacity, 1,000; rental, one night $10, three $25; share also; license, $2. Size of stage, 20x50; size of proscenium opening, 16x20; depth under stage, or cellar 4; number sets scenery, 6; trap, 1; leader of orchestra, S. Gilbo; bill poster, George Archer; number of sheets he can accommodate, 100; rate per sheet, 3c.; theatrical teamster, H. Mahannah. Newspaper: Blade (Fr.).....Hotels: Archer House, special rates, $1; Fairbury House, special rates, $1.

FARMER CITY, 2,000. R. R, Illinois Central; Ind., Bloom & Western. Bean's Opera House, Bean Bros., managers; seating capacity, 500; rental, ons night $8, three $20; license, $2; share also. Size of stage, 18x20; number sets scenery, 10; bill poster, Jos. Ball. Newspapers: Journal (Fr), Reaper, (Sat.) .....Hotels; regular rates, $2 (special also); Central.

Nov 2, 1889

Thirty Years Ago.

(The Blade, Saturday, Nov. 2, 1889.)

Born, to Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Harn, Saturday, October 26, a girl.

Homer Weaver has bought the two corner lots on the east end of Dr. Ostrander's block, opposite his own place, for the sum of $500.

The farmers of Eppards Point and vicinity are having trouble with hog cholera and many of their herds are dying rapidly.

C. L. Perlee has bought the produce business of G. R. Farr and will buy produce, poultry, etc. Mr. Farr retires to private life once more. J. R. Smith will look after the business for Mr. Perlee.

ADD LOOKING BACKWORD .....

School Notes—Mr. Mundt kindly acnted to give the zoology class a talk on insects last Friday. * * * Following are those who made 90 or above on a general average: The highest is Emma Langabeer with 96.6; second, Dora Thornton, 94.16; third, Lilly Robinson, 94.05; from 94 to 93, William Karnes, Gertrude Gregg, Maude Joy, Goldie Spence; from 93 to 92, Nealie Boyd, Anna Rex, Winnie Patton, Della McDonald, Mary McKay, May Huntoon, Lela Stafford; from 92 to 91, Della Baker, Hattie Thornton, Alta Virgin, Mary O'Malley, Ruth Kerr, Ethel Dimmick, Aurelia Gillette, Malcom McNab, Ora Anderson; Edna Ross, Minnie Robinson, and Fannie Veatch each have a grade of 90.8.

A. W. Streeper has removed his shoe shop to the basement of the G. W. Archer building, formerly occupied by the "washee laundry."

Messrs. Virgin & Co's. exhibit of ten head of French draft horses left town Monday evening in charge of Dakin and Rabb, for the big horse show in Chicago.

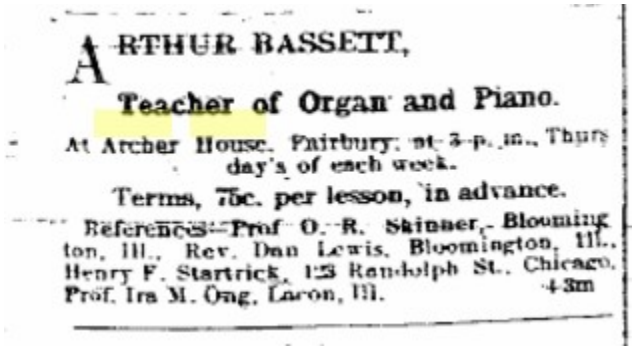
A.W. Streeper has removed his shoe shop to the basement of the G. W. Archer building, formerly occupied by the "washee laundry". Most of the businesses along Main Street had small businesses operating in their basements.

March 26, 1890
The Forrest newspaper had the story below:

Mr. and Mrs. S. E. Ellis, of Forrest, furnished music for a farewell party tendered to Mjft Nealie Boyd, at the Archer House, Thursday evening.

August 30, 1890

The Blade had this ad for music lessons at the Archer House:


ARTHUR BASSETT,

Teacher of Organ and Piano.

At Archer House, Fairbury, at 3 p. m., Thurs day's of each week.

Terms, 75c. per lesson, in advance.

References—Prof O. R. Skinner, Bloomington, Ill., Rev. Dan Lewis, Bloomington, Ill., Henry F. Startrick, 125 Randolph St., Chicago, Prof. Ira M. Ong, Lacon, Ill. 43m

November 5, 1892

Fifty Years Ago.

(The Blade, Sat. Nov. 5, 1892.)

Births—To Mr. and Mrs. William H. Bischoff, Friday, October 28, a girl. To Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Vance, Friday, November 4, a girl. To Mr. and Mrs. Marion Baker, Saturday, October 29, a boy.

John A. and Gottlieb Stoller have purchased the hardware business of Swing & Steidinger and will take possession January 1.

The New Sherman House changed hands this week, Charles Archer retiring and George Archer again assuming charge.

The ladies of the Methodist church

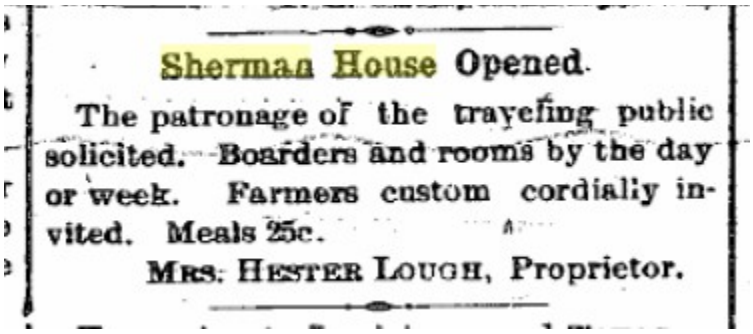
In 1892, Charles Archer (1872 - 1931), the son of George Archer (1841-1918), would have been about 20 years old. Father George would have been 51 years old. Son Charles would have been too young to retire from working. Possibly George Archer's brother, also named Charles Archer, was managing the hotel. Son Charles moved to Peoria, where he lived the rest of his life.

The Blade called it the Sherman House, even though the photograph we have indicates it

official name was the Sherman Hotel. The Blade tended to call any hotel a house in its articles about hotels.

It appears that sometime between August 30, 1890, and November 5, 1892, the name was changed from the Archer Hotel to the Sherman House. This dates the age of the Sherman House building advertising sign to about 1891.

March 24, 1894

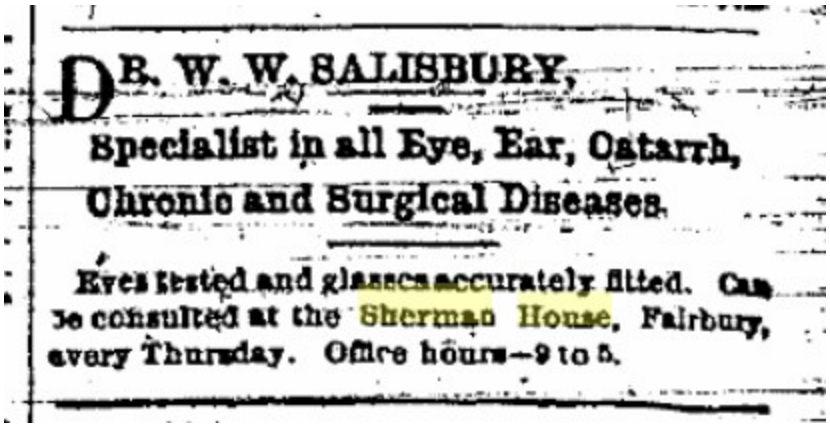


Sherman House Opened.

The patronage of the traveling public solicited. Boarders and rooms by the day or week. Farmers custom cordially invited. Meals 25c.

MRS. HESTER LOUGH, Proprietor.

March 7, 1895



DR. W. W. SALISBURY,

Specialist in all Eye, Ear, Catarrh, Chronic and Surgical Diseases.

Eyes tested and glasses accurately fitted. Can be consulted at the Sherman House, Fairbury, every Thursday. Office hours—9 to 5.

March 9, 1895

Thirty Years Ago.
(The Blade, Saturday, Mch. 9, 1895.)

Married at the residence of the bride's mother in Forrest township, Wednesday, March 6, Jesse Crouch to Miss Eva Burt. Rev. W. L. Riley performed the ceremony.

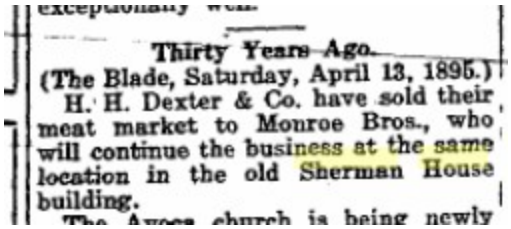
At the residence of Rev. F. D. Brooke in Melrose Park, Chicago, at high noon, March 6, Benjamin Crouch of Fairbury, to Miss Nellie Ewell, of Melrose Park.

H. H. Dexter & Co. have opened a new meat market in the rooms formerly occupied by the office and dining room of the Sherman House.

Births—To Mr. and Mrs. John Tredennick, Wednesday, March 6, a boy.

The school board has called a spe-

April 13, 1895



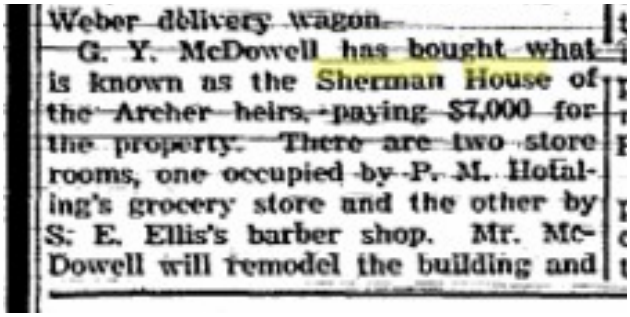
Thirty Years Ago.
(The Blade, Saturday, April 13, 1895.)

H. H. Dexter & Co. have sold their meat market to Monroe Bros., who will continue the business at the same location in the old Sherman House building.

Aug 4, 1905

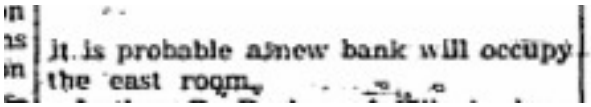
The Fairbury Blade has this article:

Forty Years Ago.
(The Blade, Friday, Aug. 4, 1905.)



Weber delivery wagon.

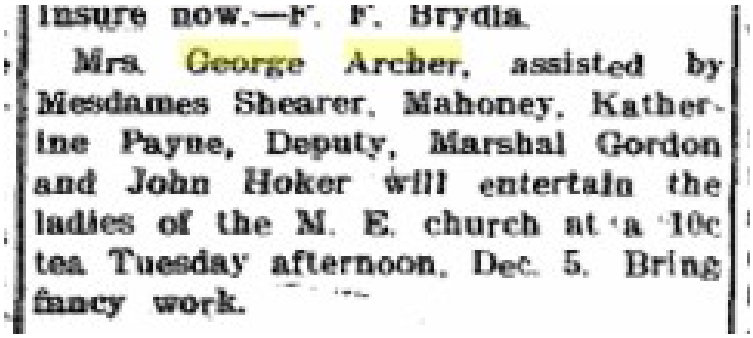
G. Y. McDowell has bought what is known as the Sherman House of the Archer heirs, paying $7,000 for the property. There are two store rooms, one occupied by P. M. Hotaling's grocery store and the other by S. E. Ellis's barber shop. Mr. McDowell will remodel the building and


it is probable a new bank will occupy the east room.

It is also interesting to note the article says the building was bought from the Archer heirs. This usually means the building owner died previously, and McDowell was buying it from the surviving relatives. George Archer was still alive in 1905, and he did not die until 1918. Maybe brother Charles Archer passed away (I have been unable to find the date of death for him). It is unknown to the author why this phrase was used in the Blade article.

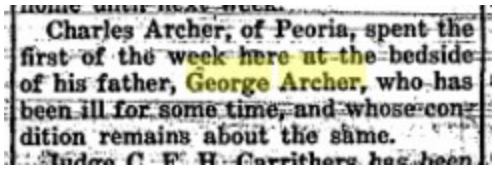
December 1, 1905

The following Fairbury Blade article appeared on this date:


insure now.—F. F. Brydia.

Mrs. George Archer, assisted by Mesdames Shearer, Mahoney, Katherine Payne, Deputy Marshal Gordon and John Hoker will entertain the ladies of the M. E. church at a 10c tea Tuesday afternoon, Dec. 5. Bring fancy work.

Jan 28, 1916


Charles Archer, of Peoria, spent the first of the week here at the bedside of his father, George Archer, who has been ill for some time, and whose condition remains about the same.

This is the son Charles Archer, who lived his life in Peoria. He came back to Fairbury because his father George Archer was ill.

July 21, 1916

The following article appeared in the Blade:

Fairbury, Illinois, Friday, July 21, 1916

ANOTHER SORDID STORY

George Archer Held to Grand Jury Under Bonds of $5,000 for Taking Indecent Liberties With Young Girls.

Another sordid story was told in Squire Lynn's court Wednesday afternoon and George Archer, one of the old residents, of Fairbury, and who has practically one foot in the grave, is in the jail at Pontiac, having failed to give the required bond of $5,000. The crime Archer is alleged to have committed is taking indecent liberties with two young girls, Loretta Mammen, aged 8, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mammen, and Josephine Van Oppen, aged 9, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Van Oppen.

Archer had evidently scented trouble as he was just getting on the 8:32 train going west Tuesday evening, when Officer Baker arrested him.

State's Attorney Ortman came over from Pontiac and prosecuted the case for the people, while Wilson & Armstrong, of Pontiac appeared for Archer. The story as told by the young girls was revolting in the extreme. The little Mammen girl was the first witness called and with much questioning and in a hesitating manner she told a story that was vile, and if proven true Archer should have to spend the remainder of his days behind the bars. She told how Archer had enticed her to his room over Hill's ice cream parlor, and there on his bed took indecent liberties with her; that she had visited his place several times, Josephine Van Oppen going with her once or twice; that he had given her money when she went to his room, he giving her a dime once, which she spent for candy and ice cream.

The Van Oppen girl told of visiting Archer's rooms with the little Mammen girl; that he took off part of her (Van Oppen) clothing and treated her indecently. She said the first time she went to Archers' room was with a Powell girl who used to reside here. When asked when it was she said it was "last year."

The story as told by the little girls is one that is unprintable.

The picture of the three principles in the case on trial was one that would cause a person to wonder if all decency in the world had ceased to be. The little girls sitting in their chairs, their feet not touching the floor, and telling of things that were degrading in the extreme in regard to the matter. Sitting between his two lawyers was Archer, a man probably between 75 and 80 years old, gray, and feeble with his many years, counselling now and then with his attorneys, and the remainder of the time drinking in every word the little girls said.

The hearing was held behind closed doors and only the local newspaper men, and those connected with the case being present.

Archer has born an unsavory reputation for some time past, and it is said that he was connected with a disreputable case some months ago, in which a young girl figured prominently.

Archer was taken to Pontiac Wednesday evening by Sheriff Ives, following his inability to get bond.

This story is retyped below:

ANOTHER SORDID STORY

George Archer Held to Grand Jury Under Bonds of $5,000 for Taking Indecent Liberties With Young Girls

Another sordid story was told in Squire Lynn's court Wednesday afternoon and George Archer, one of the oldest residents in Fairbury, and who has practically one foot in the grave, is in the jail at Pontiac, having failed to give the required bond of $5,000. The crime Archer is alleged to have committed is taking indecent liberties with two young girls, Loretta Mammen, aged 8, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mammen, and Josephine Von Oppen, aged 9, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Van Oppen.

Archer had evidently scented trouble as he was just getting on the 8:32 train going west Tuesday evening, when Officer Baker arrested him.

State's Attorney Ortman came over from Pontiac, and prosecuted the case for the people, while Wilson & Armstrong of Pontiac appeared for Archer. The story as told by the young girls was revolting in the extreme. The little Mammen girl was the first witness called, and with much questioning and in a hesitating manner she told a story that was vile, and if proven true Archer should have to spend the remainder of his days behind the bars. She told how Archer had enticed her to his room over Hill's ice cream parlor, and there on his bed too indecent liberties with her; that she had visited his place several times, Josephine Van Oppen going with her once or twice; that he had given her money when she went to his room, he giving her a dime once, which she spent for candy and ice cream.

The Van Oppen girl told of visiting Archer's room with the little Mammen girl; that he took off part of her clothing and touched her indecently. She said the first time she went, to Archer's room was with a Powell girl who used to reside here. When asked when it was she said it was last year.

The story as told by the little girls is one that is unprintable.

The picture of the three principles in the case on trial was one that would cause a normal person to wonder if all decency in the world had ceased-to-be. The little girls sitting in their chairs; their feet not touching the floor, and telling of things that were degrading in the extreme in regard to the matter. Sitting between his two lawyers was Archer, a man probably between 75 and 80 years old, gray, and feeble, with his many years, counseling now and then with his attorneys, and the remainder of the time drinking in every word the little girls said.

The hearing was held behind closed doors and only the local newspaper men, and those connected with the case being present.

Archer has born an unsavory reputation for some time past; and it is said that he was connected with a disreputable case some months ago, in which a young girl figured prominently.

Archer was taken to Pontiac Wednesday evening by Sheriff Ives, following his inability to get bond.

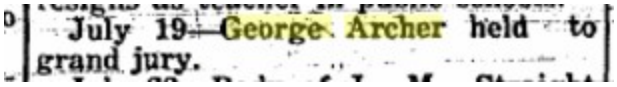
Follow-up to Blade Story about Indecent Liberties with Minor Girls

A search of the Blade and the Internet only found one other reference about this case. Shown below, George Archer was held for a grand jury hearing.

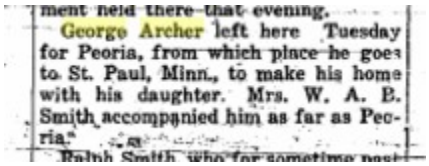
There are no newspaper stories about the results of the grand jury, no mention of a trial, and no mention of a prison sentence. George Archer moved to Minnesota to live with his daughter, and died 19 months after the initial charges in the Blade story.

So the resolution of this case is unknown at this time.

Dec 29, 1916 Blade

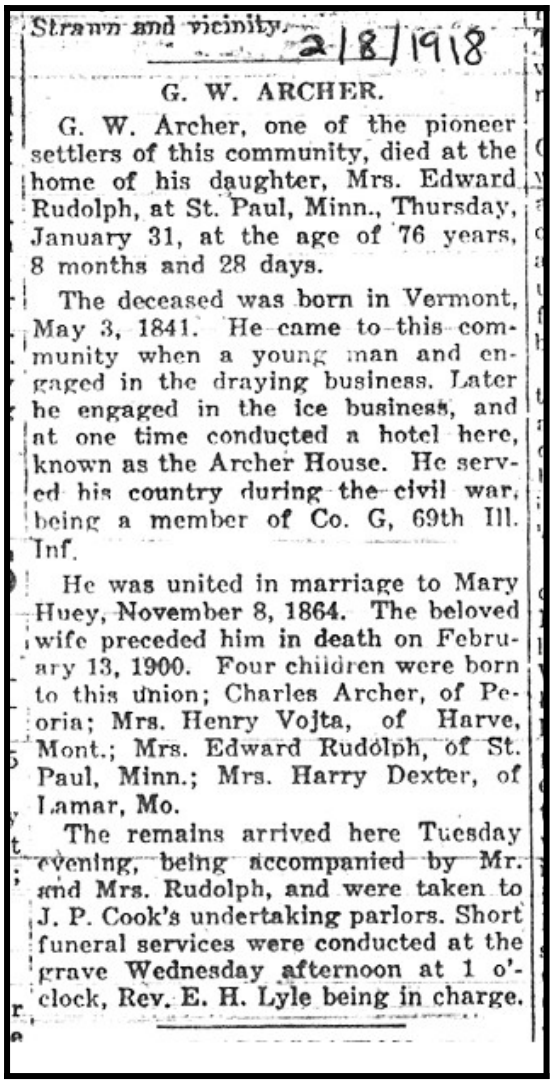

July 19—George Archer held to grand jury.

February 23, 1917 Blade


ment held there that evening.

George Archer left here Tuesday for Peoria, from which place he goes to St. Paul, Minn., to make his home with his daughter. Mrs. W. A. B. Smith accompanied him as far as Peoria.

February 8, 1918



Strawn and vicinity. 2/8/1918

G. W. ARCHER.

G. W. Archer, one of the pioneer settlers of this community, died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Edward Rudolph, at St. Paul, Minn., Thursday, January 31, at the age of 76 years, 8 months and 28 days.

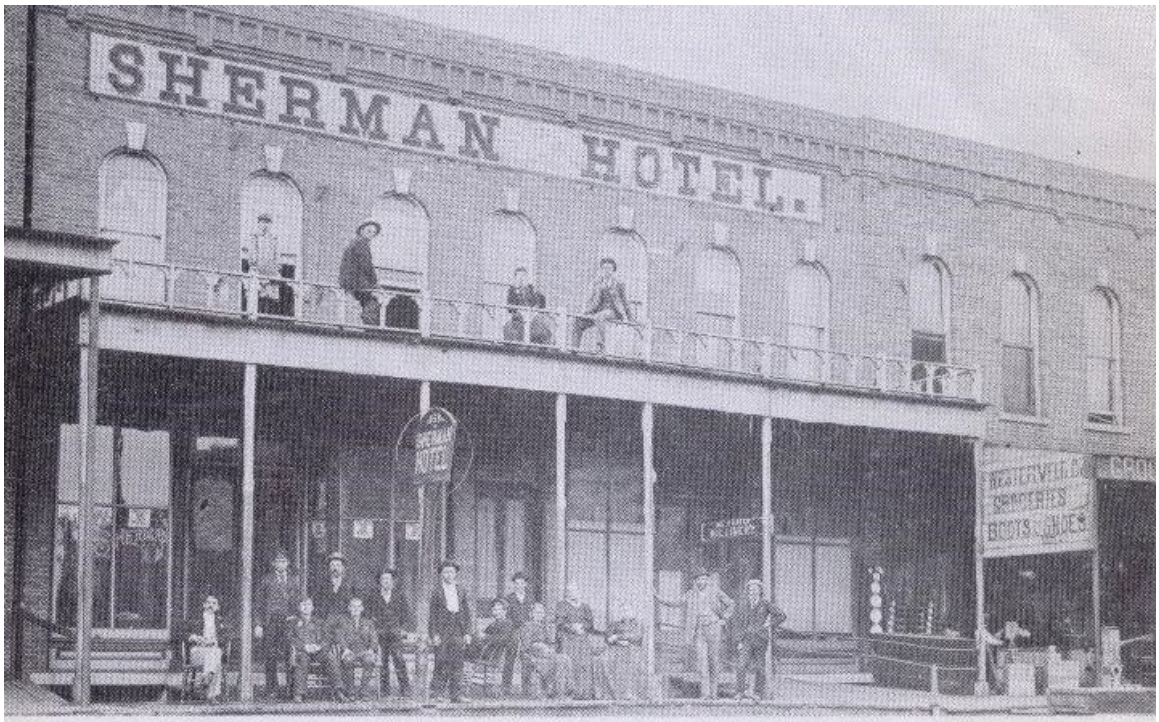
The deceased was born in Vermont, May 3, 1841. He came to this community when a young man and engaged in the draying business. Later he engaged in the ice business, and at one time conducted a hotel here, known as the Archer House. He served his country during the civil war, being a member of Co. G, 69th Ill. Inf.

He was united in marriage to Mary Huey, November 8, 1864. The beloved wife preceded him in death on February 13, 1900. Four children were born to this union; Charles Archer, of Peoria; Mrs. Henry Vojta, of Harve, Mont.; Mrs. Edward Rudolph, of St. Paul, Minn.; Mrs. Harry Dexter, of Lamar, Mo.

The remains arrived here Tuesday evening, being accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph, and were taken to J. P. Cook's undertaking parlors. Short funeral services were conducted at the grave Wednesday afternoon at 1 o'clock, Rev. E. H. Lyle being in charge.

Which Sign to Repaint

The House for the 2nd word is pretty legible. I would have to study the font style, then create the letters for Archer in the same font style. I would just paint the Archer House in white letters (no background color painting).



The Sherman House, 1891, on Main Street, was formerly called the Archer House.

The letters for Sherman Hotel are very visible in this picture. I could import the picture into my drafting program, and recreate the letters fairly easily. They look like dark letters on a light color background. If I did the white background first, then I could use plywood templates for the 12 letters, and paint the letter color on top of the white background.

It will be a lot more hours of painting to do the Sherman Hotel with background.....versus just painting Archer House with no background.

It appears the Archer House sign was painted in 1882 and the Sherman Hotel in 1891.

I could make both signs in my drafting program, then consult Facebook to see which one people like the best.

Archer House Font Selection

Using the faded image of the second word "HOUSE" from a 2017 photograph, all of the available fonts in Google Sketchup drafting program were reviewed. The font closest to the ghost sign image is Clarendon BLK BT in Sketchup. Scaling it to about the right size to match the 2017 photograph gave this result:

History of the Clarendon Font Style

Clarendon is a wonderful example of a class of Slab Serifs called Ionic or Egyptian. Though Clarendon itself was created by Robert Besley in 1845 it is inspired by the typeface Antique, one of the original slab serifs. While Clarendon and Antique share a similar flavor, Clarendon's addition of bracketed serifs, the gentile curves connecting the serif to the body of the letter, gives it the ability to work better inline of a body of text with other serifed fonts as well as giving it its softer and more approachable feel. It quickly became one of the most popular typefaces of its time period and to the point where today we rather quickly associate it with turn of the century England and in the U.S., the old west.

Since the Archer House sign was probably painted in 1882, and the Clarendon font was introduced in 1845, this font is age-appropriate for this sign.

Sherman Hotel Font Selection

From the old photograph, Clarendon BT is a better match for this sign font.

Because the old photograph is black & white, it is unknown what colors were used on this sign. I used blue lettering on a white background for illustration purposes.

Final Decision on which Name to Repaint

After consulting with some other Fairbury historians, the consensus is to repaint the original Archer House sign. It is the oldest and dates back to 1882. The repainted letters will be a white color, the same paint as used on the Swing & Steidinger sign across the street.

Research Performed by:

Dale C. Maley
17 Brookwood Court
Fairbury, IL 61739
DaleMaley@Gmail.com
815-692-6633